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## **ARIZONA LAW ENFORCEMENT ANNOUNCE MAJOR BUST OF VIOLENT STREET GANG**

PHOENIX, Ariz. – The Arizona Attorney General’s Office, the Department of Public Safety, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Phoenix Police Department, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service announce today, September 9, 2008, the execution of 9 search warrants and the arrest of 51 gang members/associates, 38 arrested today and 13 appeared by summons. The FBI’s Violent Street Gang Task Force comprised of the Phoenix Police Department, Department of Public Safety, Mesa Police Department, and the Arizona Department of Corrections worked jointly with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Arizona Attorney General’s office to diminish gang related crime.

In January 2007, top law enforcement officials publicly stated their resolve to address street gang violence. Today’s efforts show a continued effort to lessen gang related activity in our communities. “Stopping crimes committed by violent gang members has and will always be a top priority for me. Dismantling, disrupting, and dissolving gangs are among my highest priorities and one of the highest priorities for the residents of Phoenix. So far this year, the Phoenix Police Department Gang Enforcement Unit has arrested 589 gang members,” said Phoenix Police Chief Jack Harris.

On Monday, Attorney General Terry Goddard obtained indictments against 43 individuals in connection with this long-term investigation into fraud and drug trafficking, bringing the total to 102 individuals indicted to date. The defendants were indicted in Maricopa County Superior Court on numerous felony charges, including fraud schemes and possession of dangerous drugs for sale. Once the defendants are served, information on those individuals will be made available.

“We will not tolerate violent, organized crime in our communities. I will aggressively prosecute all those who endanger our families and neighborhoods,” Goddard said. “I appreciate the partnership of the Phoenix Police Department, FBI, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and other agencies who helped remove these dangerous criminals from our streets today.”

“The variety of crimes allegedly committed by the defendants illustrates the importance of law enforcement partnerships,” said Pete Zegarac, Inspector in Charge of the US Postal Inspection Service’s Phoenix Division. “The collaborative efforts put forth during this investigation ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice.”

It cannot be emphasized enough the importance of the multi-agency contributions to this investigation. Our federal partner, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, provided invaluable investigative assistance to this effort. Of equal importance, the Phoenix Police Department and the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) contributed greatly with leadership, personnel, and investigative expertise.

Acting/Special Agent in Charge, Steven R. Hooper stated, “Gang activity in any community directly affects the quality of life of those who live in that community. If this activity goes unchecked it will erode the foundation of family life. The FBI’s Violent Street Gang Task Force partnered with the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Arizona Attorney General’s Office to combat gang related crime. These arrests today show our continued efforts to diminish gang related activity in our communities. Our efforts today will ensure a better tomorrow for those who were affected by this gang activity.”

Today’s enforcement action exemplifies the continued resolve on the part of law enforcement and our prosecutorial partners to effectively minimize gang related crime. The law enforcement community will continue to move forward and target the Greater Phoenix area to deter gang activity and apprehend those who take part in criminal gang activity.

“This combined law enforcement effort to arrest criminal street gang members in Phoenix and throughout the state continues to demonstrate the continued cooperation between our law enforcement professionals. This is evident by the cooperation between the Phoenix Police Department, FBI and other partners in the commitment of its gang enforcement investigators in partnering with Governor Napolitano and the Department of Public Safety in operations of this nature,” said Director Roger Vanderpool of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

An indictment is not evidence of guilt. All persons charged with a crime are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. The prosecution is being handled by the Attorney General’s Office.

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